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**MISSISSIPPI SITE ADVANCES TO SECOND ROUND IN BID
FOR MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR BIO-DEFENSE PROJECT**

(JACKSON, Mississippi) – Flora Industrial Park in Madison County, Mississippi, has been listed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as one of five potential locations to build a National Bio and Agro-Defense Project facility (NBAF), Governor Haley Barbour and the Mississippi Congressional delegation announced today.

“We're grateful the Department of Homeland Security has decided to keep Flora Industrial Park on the list of potential locations for the NBAF facility, which will provide huge benefits to Mississippi, especially in terms of job creation and construction. The importance of this facility is evidenced by its classification as a Biosafety Level 4—the nation's highest rating—as well as the highly competitive site selection process,” Governor Barbour said. “I remain confident that with the united efforts of our partners in the Gulf States Bio and Agro-Defense Consortium including the work of Battelle Memorial Institute, Mississippi will continue to be the best choice to locate this multimillion-dollar research laboratory.”

The proposed 520,000 square foot NBAF will primarily research foreign animal diseases, such as avian flu and foot and mouth disease, along with potential agents that could affect humans, bioterrorism, and to develop countermeasures such as drugs and vaccines. The center would have the nation's highest Biosafety Level 4 (BL-4) designation, which is one currently held by the Centers for Disease Control in downtown Atlanta. The NBAF would be a \$500 million construction project scheduled to begin in 2008. When the center opens in 2012, it would employ about 400 people, including more than 200 scientists as well as technicians and support staff making an average salary of about \$75,000 per year.

U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, said, “I am pleased the Madison County, Mississippi - Gulf State Bio proposal has advanced to the next phase in the competitive process to select the location of the proposed National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility. This is significant for the 2nd Congressional District and the State of Mississippi. The diverse array of community and university involvement, without question, strengthens the Mississippi proposal.”



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U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss, said, "The Department of Homeland Security has recognized the value of the cutting edge veterinary, agricultural, biomedical, and pharmaceuticals research taking place in our state by selecting Mississippi as a potential location for the new National Bio and Agro Defense Facility. Mississippi's universities have long been national leaders in the areas of science and research, and the location of a facility of this significance in Mississippi will enable our state to expand its expertise in these fields while also generating economic opportunity in our state. As the selection process moves forward, I will continue to work to ensure that Mississippi is fully considered as a location for this important facility."

U.S. Rep. Chip Pickering, R-Miss., said, "Livable communities, strong schools, sustainable infrastructure and its proximity to an expanding high-tech and defense research community make the Madison site very attractive to Homeland Security. Today's news bodes well for our consortium and I look forward to continuing to work with Governor Barbour and the Mississippi delegation to bring the new jobs, capital funding, and enduring federal investment associated with this project to Mississippi."

U.S. Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., said, "This facility will bring hundreds of good paying, professional jobs to the Jackson Metro Area. Mississippi is a contender for more and more high-tech research initiatives, and certainly our being selected as a finalist for this center is a testament to the quality of our state's community and economic development programs."

The Department of Homeland Security's major site selection criteria include access to university research and facilities; location near an international airport; quality of life for top scientific researchers including housing, schools, cultural events, recreation and entertainment; and ability to support and absorb a major research institution.

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